

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING
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& INVESTIGATIONS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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March 8, 2023

The Honorable Bryan Steil
Chairman
Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Morelle
Ranking Member
Committee on House Administration
1216 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle

I write to offer my testimony for the Committee's Member Day hearing.

Two years ago, I discovered that the young parents on my staff based in the district were not offered the same access to childcare. If you are based in D.C., you had access to the childcare facilities offered by the House. Our whole team based in the district was not afforded any help or assistance with childcare. In the past four years, I have had three births on staff and over four that needed childcare.

The disparity in childcare benefits offered between D.C.-based staff members and staff based in the home district was shocking. Based on feedback and challenges faced by staff in the district, I urge the Committee to ensure childcare benefits are equitable among all congressional employees.

I, along with many of my colleagues, welcomed the expansion of authorities for the development of a childcare subsidy program for staff in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023. This will allow funding to be used for childcare subsidies in the House of Representatives and gives the Committee on House Administration the authority and responsibility of implementing this program.

It is not lost on any member of the House of Representatives that the cost of childcare varies greatly from state to state. The challenges with cost and access are inherent to any discussion on childcare and cannot be discounted as you all begin to implement this program.

Childcare is one of the biggest challenges for congressional staff and hurts our ability to retain talent among our offices.

According to a report from the Economic Policy Institute, the average annual cost of infant care in Michigan¹ is almost \$11,000 per year, and nearly \$9,000 per year for a four-year-old. In Wisconsin², infant care costs \$12,500 per year on average, and most than \$10,000 per year for a four-year-old. In New York³, the average annual cost for an infant and a four-year-old are over \$15,000 and \$12,000, respectively. This is unsustainable, and while solving this problem completely is outside the parameters of what we're discussing today, we can and should make this considerable expense easier on our staff.

I strongly believe that a program mirrored off the Student Loan Repayment Program could prove successful for offering childcare subsidies to district office employees. It's not perfect but could still serve as an example of an existing program that is offered to both D.C. and district-based employees.

I welcome the opportunity to assist and partner with the Committee on House Administration to develop a benefits program or pilot program for offices to provide more benefits to district office staff and their families. I further urge the Committee to conduct a needs assessment with members of staff who are parents to get their perspective. I greatly appreciate your time and attention to this critical matter to help all offices ensure that their staff and their families can thrive.

Sincerely,



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

¹ <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/MI>

² <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/WI>

³ <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/NY>